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is nearly wasted, since the primary object of drawing is to obtain or convey ideas; and the true worth of our work is not in the pencilling, but in the subject. Drawing, for the sake of drawing, is like writing in copy-books all one's life.

Sketches

OF THE GREAT MASTERS.

ALBERT DURER.

THE painter who has wintered in Italy, and on his return to the north lingers on the slopes of the Tyrolean Alps, will often, before plunging into their wild valleys, cast a last fond glance back to the sunny and luxuriant country he is about to lose sight of. Italy, soft, sensuous, glowing, stretches away to the South—a valley of fertility, where the Po winds through delectable meadows, vineyards and olive plantations, the hazy Apennines gently closing up the distance; but imagination extends the view to Florence and Val-d'Arno—to Imperial Rome and the yellow Tiber, and all that perfect Art, balmy climate, venerable relics and hallowed memories can do, combine to render the image full and satisfactory to the mind's eye. From this he turns reluctantly northward, and at once the scene changes, and as he proceeds, becomes more and more stern and cold. Barren cliffs overhang the road, grey castles crown the hill-tops, and overlook ravines through which torrents hurry, splashing among rocks: as he pushes on, an occasional snowy peak juts up from gathering clouds, and as night comes on, cold, blackish vapors drag along the hill-sides, and the wind moans and whirls the snow-drifts among the hollows of the mountains. Akin to this is the difference between Italian and German Art. Italian Art is full, mellow and pleasurable; German, hard, severe, and gloomy. In expression and character the latter surpasses. The Italians were content to charm the senses, to feast the imagination, to touch the heart, and lead the feelings captive. The Germans would instruct us, they almost pain us with the vividness of their truths, and will have our entire attention, though they excite it by piercing us to the quick. They terrify us with strange visions, and crowd upon us with an exhaustless variety of objects, minute, expressive, and individual, to the last degree. Albert Durer is the very type of the race—the essential oil of northern Art. His subjects are as varied as life itself, and his invention fertile beyond measure. His imagination is strong, inclining to images of terror and grotesqueness; his forms are truthful but homely; his outline sharp; his execution firm and nervous, and his coloring brilliant. He delights in elaborate exactness, often portrays every hair and wrinkle, every minute fold in drapery, and each odd shape in the cut of queer outlandish dresses, coupling this painstaking minuteness in the finish of accessories, with an exuberant fancy and a fervid conception of his main subject. In his sublime design of the preparation for the Crucifixion, the various forms of malignity, suffering, and sorrow with which he impresses you, have not prevented his pursuing to the extremest

point of elaboration the meanest little folds of an ugly head-dress, or his touching with sharp precision each tiny rivet in a piece of armor. Truthfulness, earnestness and power are Durer's. His was a grand, energizing, honest soul, and as the very prince of all such, we must love and venerate him. For clearness of conception, and ideas fresh and vigorous from Nature—for uncorruptible love of truth, for faithfulness and patience in perfecting every work to the utmost of his power, he stands unrivalled, and an example to all times. His father was a goldsmith, and bred his son to the same pursuit. This was a good training, and inured him to the careful elaboration so necessary in metal work. Sculptors in marble soon learn to avoid small projections and light open-work, which is so easily knocked off, and aim to produce a finished effect, combined with a broad and quiet surface. Metal is capable of much more lightness of detail. In the treatment of hair, for instance, the marble emulates its waving lines and soft masses, but seldom ventures on its loose ringlets or straggling flying ends; but the bronze bust may almost reproduce the hair with its infinitude of delicate tendrils. This difference is analogous to a general distinction between Italian and German Art, and the metallic method especially marks the style of Durer. He combined the minutest detail and excess of individual parts with the grandest simplicity in general plan, and in the wildest flights of his imagination embodies a multitude of sharply-defined accessories.

The goldsmith's shop did not satisfy Durer; he desired to be a painter, and his father placed him as a pupil with Wohlge-muth, under whom he studied for three years, and then travelled as an apprentice for four years, earning his bread, doubtless, by working as a painter, engraver, and goldsmith. These years of travel and work must have begotten a manly self-reliance, and enriched his mind with a vast variety of scenes and characters.

On returning to Nuremberg, in 1494, he married the handsome daughter of a noted mechanician, Agnes Frey, an event which turned out a "pretty kettle of fish" for the painter, since Agnes, though fair and sweet without, was all vinegar and wormwood within. The mild and serious Albert, his brain teeming with ideas, steadily bent on excellence, and absorbed in the labors of the studio, was watched with jealous eyes by his acid spouse. She embittered his life by harsh insinuations and complaints, and it is believed hastened his death by her endless fretting and scolding.

As the ear of one who longs for sleep is pierced by the creaking of a file, so did the sharp voice of this termagant for ever disturb the sacred privacy of Albert's studio. Poor Durer, he must have had a keen sense of St. James' words: "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Perhaps the storm which was always brewing for him when he most needed cheerful repose, kept him more constant to his easel, for the number of his works is very great. He shone in all branches, painting, designing, and engraving, which latter Art he greatly improved. His fame as an engraver extended to Italy, impressions of his plates were eagerly sought for there, and the noted Marc Antonio based the excellence of his style of

engraving on the specimens of Durer's talent which reached him in Italy. So much were they esteemed, that counterfeits were made and sold widely, greatly to Durer's mortification. Raphael admired them, and exchanged portraits with the master German. Though of very original mind, picking his materials fresh from Nature, and assiduously watchful of her inexhaustible variety, he was alive to the charms of other styles and schools, and their effect is traceable in his designs. This appears to have been the case with most of the greatest artists. That very delicacy of mental structure which renders them sensitive to the beauties of Nature, necessitates sympathy with the characteristics of other minds. The highest genius is generous, catholic and confiding, sees and relishes beauties of every sort, and is easily swayed by them. A cold, severe, carping, jealous spirit is the property of *cleverness*, of a talent often so brilliant as to pass for genius; but such a temper seldom possesses the conceptive faculty, a power always allied to a genial and sympathetic soul. When Durer was in Flanders (where he passed several years), his pictures abounded in homely incidents vividly drawn from Nature: he even went so far in a composition of the death of the Virgin, as to represent one of the apostles strengthening himself in his troubles by a draught from a flask of beer or wine.

When he leaned to the Italian manner he was not always successful, as for instance, in the suicide of Lucretia, at Munich, a nude figure, but the head vulgar and disagreeable. In the *Ecce Homo*, he has shown the deepest feeling, the treatment is more large and noble than usual with him, and there is less of that wiry elaboration in the locks of hair and folds of drapery to which he is so addicted. His Madonnas are generally portraits of some quiet, domestic, virtuous Dutch lady, sometimes bordering on the plainest familiarity, and then again almost reaching the point of divine purity and elevation. His model, for the time, probably influenced him entirely. In his old heads he is full of vigor and life; they are ugly but expressive. His bad men are scarred with the marks of evil lives, and drawn with all the sharpness of individual portraiture. His close view of nature, wiry outline, square and knotted folds of drapery, and excessive minutiae, have affected German Art to this day, and, what is happier, so have his love of truth, earnest purpose, rich imagination and vigorous expression of life. The various portraits of him by his own hand, represent a thoughtful, modest, and noble countenance. There seems to be a certain repose and discretion, an amiability and gentleness, through which the latent sparks of an inextinguishable fire and energy discover themselves, as in an old lion at rest. His manners were courteous, his bearing was mild and dignified, and his regard for others had a leaning to kindness. His voice was musical, and his conversation full of a rich persuasiveness, to which all listened with delight. His appreciation of talent was just and liberal. Young artists came to him freely for counsel, and went away strengthened by his sincerity, and charmed and enriched by the discourse of this wise and benevolent patriarch of Art.

D. HUNTINGTON.